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Transvaal Methodism.

SELECTED CHAPTERS

FROM

"A MISSION TO THE TRANSVAAL,"

BY

Rev. AMOS BURNET.

CAPETOWN:
METHODIST BOOK ROOM.
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CHAPTER I.

SMALL BEGINNINGS.

Saw ye not the cloud arise
Little as a human hand?

The founder of our Church in the Transvaal was not a fully equipped and formally appointed missionary, but a simple and uneducated native named David Magata. The history of this humble man throws a clear light upon the vicissitudes and manners of those early days. It is not easy at this distance of time to weave into a closely connected whole the fragments of his story that have been preserved to us, but the main outlines are thoroughly attested by witnesses still living. David Magata was a native of the Magaliesberg, and was taken captive by the fierce Matabele who came sweeping down upon the weaker tribe in periodical raids. For some years the captured youth was a personal attendant upon the famed Moselekatse, whose principal kraal was at Mosega, not far from the present town of Zeerust in the western Transvaal. Meanwhile the Great Trek had taken place. For reasons which cannot perhaps be quite understood at the present time, a large number of Boers resolved to break away from British rule in Cape Colony, and seek a new home in the unknown lands beyond the Orange and Vaal rivers. The ostensible reason was the deep dissatisfaction of these men with the action of the British Government in the matter of the abolition of slavery. It may be that a good and noble thing was not carried out in the best possible way; perhaps the Imperial Government was not well served by its agents and advisers. The generosity of the Government's compensation was obscured and largely nullified by the method in which that compensation was paid out. But there can be no doubt that other coincident and subsidiary influences

were at work. The restless spirit of the explorer was strong on the men of that generation, and a great and insatiable land-hunger was in their hearts. But whatever views we may hold as to the actual causes that led to the movement, no one can be blind to the determination, the bravery, the spirit of stern endurance which characterized the bands, numbering about ten thousand persons, that left such civilization as they knew and went forth to found a new country. They suffered terrible hardships, and their line of march could be traced by the graves that they left on the way. Mile by mile they fought their way forward, sometimes battling with beasts of prey, sometimes beating back hordes of warlike savages. In that long procession there was a lad of ten years of age named Paul Krüger, whom we meet many years later as the iron-handed President of the South African Republic. Lines of influence converge in the strangest way, and we shall find that the Great Trek had much to do with the establishment of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal, and Paul Krüger will appear later on as an actor in the drama that was being wrought out.

As the time passed the emigrant Boers pressed northward, and eventually came into deadly conflict with Moselekatse, who suffered utter defeat and fled before his white assailants. Amid the confusion of those days David Magata made his escape, and, fleeing southward, took no rest till he arrived safely at Thaba 'Nchu. Here he heard the gospel in the Methodist Church, was convicted of sin, brought forth fruits meet for repentance, and in due time was baptized and received into the Church.

Then there came into his heart that eager yearning for his friends which is one of the most easily identified verifications of true conversion, and he went off to the distant Magaliesberg to tell the good news to his own people, if haply they might still be there. But he found no trace of them, for all were dead or dispersed, and he went to Potchefstroom and settled there. Then began the great work of his life.

Without call or status or salary, he became our first missionary in the Transvaal. With a zeal that approved itself as apostolic in its eagerness, its constancy, and its disinterested motives, he sought out the people and preached to them the gospel which had so changed his own life and thoughts. Morning, noon, and night, he was ever on the alert. In the market-square, by the wayside, in the lowly huts, on the quiet farm, he spoke to all who would listen, and in glowing words told of the joy he had found in the Saviour whom he commended to them. He seized the strangers who passed through the town, and to them he told his story. In this world we shall never know how far his influence extended, what subsequent movements, apparently unrelated, were really the fruit of the seed that he sowed beside all waters.

But one day these earnest and self-imposed labours were brought to an abrupt and unexpected termination. The Boers were greatly incensed that the gospel, which many regarded as their own peculiar heritage, should be publicly proclaimed by this ex-slave to his own despised countrymen, and, by order of the Landdrost, David was lashed to a wagon-wheel and flogged on the public square of Potchefstroom. But the sentence went further, and, in addition to the indignity already put upon him, he was banished from the Republic. In accordance with the terms of this order David went to Natal; but the zeal of the Lord ate him up, and his spirit knew no rest. Under this strong and holy compulsion, he set out for the northern parts of the Transvaal, and met Paul Krüger on the border. The latter was now Commandant, and his rapid rise to power showed the existence of those qualities of determination and persistency which in his later years made him a dictator among his own people. The young Commandant heard David's story, and then gave him written authority to return to Potchefstroom. Probably Krüger saw in this incident a fair opportunity for administering a much-needed rebuke to the men of the capital, who were ever inclined to take too

much upon themselves; but we may well believe that higher motives helped to produce that document, which meant so much for this persecuted and defenceless evangelist. History does not record the manner of David's reception at his old home; but evidently the leaders of the people there knew that their wisdom lay in honouring Krüger's permit, for David seems ever after to have lived and worked without molestation. Always more or less eccentric, he developed a restlessness in his later life which led him to take long journeys for the purpose of preaching the gospel he loved. He ranks as the Billy Bray of the Transvaal.

The more formal organization of our Transvaal Mission may be traced in the official documents. In the year 1865 we find the first mention of the Transvaal in the *Minutes* of the Conference, and Potchefsstroom is put down as a place where a minister is "earnestly requested." Two years later a minister was actually sent, but for some reason his stay was very brief. In that year we have a membership of twenty-two persons duly reported. Thenceforward, for four years, we lose sight of this mission altogether; but in the year 1872 the matter was evidently taken up with some determination, for we find that the "Mission beyond the Vaal River" has a recognized place, and three ministers—George Blencowe, William Wynne, and George Weavind, are appointed to Potchefstroom. Mr. Blencowe was no stranger in the Transvaal. In 1868, being then stationed at Ladysmith in Natal, he gives a detailed account of a visit which he had recently paid to Wakkerstroom in the eastern Transvaal. He says, "Wakkerstroom, in the Transvaal Republic, is 125 miles distant. I have only been three times. . . . The Landdrost assured me last week that the whole neighbourhood were, and felt themselves, greatly indebted to me for coming. . . . The Republic only wants the righteousness and truth of the gospel to make it a paradise." Later in the same year he gives a striking account of the baptism of a Russian Jew. In December 1869 he reports another

visit to Wakkerstroom, and a first visit to the sawyers in the Pongola bush. He also preached in a house about thirty miles west of the station formerly occupied by Mr. Allison among the Swazis. Up to this point Mr. Blencowe's labours had been apparently confined to the eastern side of the Transvaal; but in September 1871 he paid his first visit to Potchefstroom, approaching that place from Harrismith in the Orange Free State. He left Harrismith on Monday, the 11th, and reached his destination at sunset on the 16th. For a minister who had travelled thirty-two years this was excellent riding, as a glance at the map will show. How one admires the restless energy of these pioneers, who, without waiting for formal instructions, were always pushing out to new centres and pressing forward to new victories!

The Rev. J. M. Ludorf had visited Potchefstroom and laboured there for some months, but it would seem that his appointment was of an informal character. That was during the time that Potchefstroom appeared on the *Minutes* as a place where one was wanted. It seems to have been felt that in those early days our hold upon the work was of a precarious and uncertain nature. In the *Missionary Notices* for 1873 there is a very suggestive foot-note, written no doubt by one of the Secretaries of that day, which runs as follows: "We wish to remind our readers that this is a trial mission, to ascertain whether we can occupy the vast country between the Vaal and the Zambesi rivers."

The Rev. Frederick Mason, to whom all students of South African Methodism owe a great debt, was of opinion that this note was written by Rev. W. B. Boyce. At any rate, there the note stands as a strange expression of a fear, and a thinly veiled prophecy of probable failure.

In 1874 the name of James Calvert, of South Sea fame, appears as a member of the staff, and we find the first mention of Pretoria as a place to which a minister is to be sent.

The years that followed were troubled and anxious. The country was poor and the people unsettled. In 1877 came the first annexation, with its subsequent complications and strife. But through all these trying days the work was maintained, though progress was slow and only achieved with immense labour and amid many discouragements, so that when the war of 1880 came the number of members in the Transvaal only totalled seventy-eight: namely, seventy at Pochefstroom and eight in Pretoria. That was a smaller number than had been reported four years earlier. Many causes contributed to make the advance slower than might have been expected. There were frequent changes in the staff; the cost of travelling and the immense distances made supervision insufficient and uncertain; for several years the country was in a most unsettled condition; then came the sieges of Pretoria and Potchefstroom, with all the attendant miseries and distractions of the first Boer war.

CHAPTER II.

LATER HISTORY.

Now it spreads along the skies,
Hangs o'er all the thirsty land.

The second stage of the history of the Methodist Church in the Transvaal opens with the meeting of the first Synod, which assembled in Pretoria on Monday, January 23, 1882. Only three ministers were present: the Revs. Owen Watkins (in the chair), S. Barrett Cawood, and C. Stuart Franklin—the last being still in the third year of his probation. The Rev. George Weavind was also a member of the District Staff, but he was taking a much-needed furlough in England.

In order to obtain a clear knowledge of the situation, we must briefly trace the steps that had led up to the formation of this new District. It will have been already noted that it was from Natal that the work in the Transvaal had its organized beginning; and it was from the same quarter that the action was taken which led to this new development. Soon after the first annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 the Chairman of the Natal District, the Rev. Frederick Mason, called a meeting of superintendents to consider what could be done to strengthen and develop the mission in the new colony. It was recommended that speedy and effective measures be taken, and that the Rev. Ezra Nuttall should be sent to Pretoria. The Missionary Committee did not, however, act upon these recommendations at the time. At the next meeting of the Natal Synod (it is a convenient anachronism to use this term, though it was not adopted till a later date), held in January 1878, the following Minute was passed and inserted in the annual letter to the Missionary Committee: "We are glad that your attention has been directed to the importance of the Transvaal. It will open the

way to the interior. . . . It should be made a separate District. . . ." A year later the Synod went into the matter more fully, and it was again urged that the Transvaal should be organized as a distinct District, that Pretoria or Middleburg would be a good centre, and that the Chairman of the Natal and Bloemfontein Districts should meet at Pretoria and hold a consultation, the results of which should be reported to the Missionary Committee. The Synod proved the depth and sincerity of its interest by offering to give up one European minister and two native agents for the new District, and further pledged itself to raise, by special contributions, a sum of one hundred pounds towards the cost of this fresh development. The Rev. Owen Watkins offered for work in the new District, and in a foot-note to the stations his appointment was recommended.

In May 1880, the Rev. John Kilner arrived at Maritzburg, and at his request a special meeting of the District was summoned. Fourteen ministers were present, and there was a general and prolonged discussion of all matters connected with the work. The question of the Transvaal held a prominent place in the discussions, and the following resolution was adopted: "This District agrees to give up one European missionary, and pledges itself to provide £200 per annum for five years. Will also endeavour to provide a number of native agents, and give £100 per annum for five years for their support. . . . . Swaziland to be included in the new mission."

So the matter stood when the third Triennial Meeting assembled in Queenstown a month later. Those who had the privilege of attending that truly historic gathering tell us that at first there were evidences of a feeling on the part of representatives from other Districts that Natal had been a little previous, not to say officious, in making itself so prominent in advocating measures affecting the work in the Transvaal; but after full discussion and explanation, the whole meeting cordially supported all the proposals that had

been so persistently put forward. The Missionary Committee was requested to send the Rev. Owen Watkins to Pretoria, appointing a minister of experience and standing to take his place at Maritzburg. The Conference of 1880 approved of this suggestion, and the Transvaal and Swaziland District appeared for the first time on the stations, with Mr. Watkins as the first Chairman and General Superintendent. At a later meeting of the Natal District it was arranged that the Revs. C. S. Franklin, Daniel 'Msimang, and M. Mokoni should be sent, as early as possible, to the new District. Three stations formerly under the jurisdiction of the Natal District were handed over, and a sum of £1,400 from the grant made by the Missionary Committee to Natal was assigned to the Transvaal. Unfortunately, altered circumstances made it impossible to do anything towards the promised annual donations for five years; but Natal had shown the right spirit and relinquished a part of its annual grant that was out of all proportion to the responsibilities of which it was relieved by the rearrangement. War broke out in December 1880, and prevented the four ministers from going up as soon as they intended; but the delay was not for long. Eventually each member of the welcome reinforcement reached his destination—the European members in time to meet in their first Synod as stated in the opening sentence of this chapter.

It was soon apparent that in all these arrangements those who made them had been well advised, and had moved with a full understanding of the times. Mr. Watkins was a great traveller, and laid large plans for the extension of the work and the occupation of the country. Mr Weavind gave himself to the equally important task of training a native agency, and laid the foundations of Kilnerton, which now easily takes the first place amongst similar institutions in the colony. In 1884 the Rev. George Lowe commenced his important work at Good Hope in the north, and touched and evangelized large sections of the vast Zoutpans-

berg District. The Mission to the Baralong grew rapidly, and during the expedition of 1885 the Royal Engineers built for these people a large church in Mafeking, which was opened amid great rejoicing.

About this time the discovery of gold in the Transvaal gave an extraordinary impetus to the English section of the mission. Only about twenty years ago the Witwatersrand was wild, wind-swept veld. An occasional Dutch wagon rolled lazily over the barren ridges. An infrequent farmhouse was found in the more fruitful valleys. But the discoveries that were made altered all that. The official beginning of Johannesburg only dates from January 1, 1886. To-day we sit in the heart of a throbbing town, with a large and varied population, noble buildings, public libraries, colleges and schools, hospitals, thirty churches and suburbs that stretch for six or eight miles. When the first sale of building sites took place in Johannesburg the Rev. F. J. Briscoe was already on his way from England to become the first resident minister, of any church, on the Rand. The Rev. George Weavind and others had previously paid visits and held services, but with the coming of Mr. Briscoe there began the organization of regular church work. For six months the minister lived in a wagon, no other accommodation being available. Services were held in a shed used as a carpenter's shop. Very often the loan of an unfinished building was obtained, and when the store or warehouse was completed the church had to seek similar accommodation elsewhere. It sometimes happened that the building for the services on the following Sunday was not secured till Friday evening, and Saturday afternoon was spent in borrowing planks for the seating. The following week the process was repeated. In the course of a few months a simple church was erected. Other ministers followed till, in 1893, the Rev. William Hudson was appointed to the superintendency of the undivided Johannesburg Circuit, and the work spread along the Reef both east and

west, and eleven churches were built within three years.

During these years the territory around Delagoa Bay comes into view as a part of the Transvaal District. The occupation of Portuguese East Africa by our first South African martyr, William Threlfall, is a quite forgotten chapter of Methodist history. This devoted young minister burned to start a mission in Madagascar, and was only content to labour in Cape Colony because that lay on the road to the field on which he had set his heart. So it came to pass that in May 1823 he accepted the offer of the godly commander of a British frigate to set him down on the shores of Delagoa Bay. He lived there for several months, and suffered incredible hardships. At length, worn down by fever, and apparently dying, he was taken on board a schooner and landed at Cape Town, where everybody prophesied his early death. He recovered, however, and went on a mission to Great Namaqualand, where he was brutally murdered. The whole story must soon be retold for the present generation. From that date Delagoa Bay drops out of view of the Methodist Church until the time of which we are now writing, and once more we find that our Church has an interest in that region, for in the *Minutes of Conference* for 1891 we read this simple statement: "Delagoa Bay—to be visited." Behind that uninspiring line there lies the whole story of Robert Mashaba, which is a fitting sequel to the history of the martyred Threlfall. Once more we find that the wind bloweth where it listeth.

Mashaba was born near Delagoa Bay. Left motherless at an early age, he was brought up by his grandmother. After she was killed he was cared for by other relatives, until he began to take long journeys with his father, who was a mighty hunter of the elephant and other wild animals that abounded in that region. For awhile he worked in Durban, but on returning home he was again employed as an assistant

in the exciting hunting trips organised by his father and his uncle.

About this time there came to Delagoa Bay a cousin of Mashaba's who had acquired some little education in the British Colonies. This youth suggested that his friends were being robbed when they sold their hides, and advised them to insist upon having the hides weighed out, saying that he would attend to the business for them as he could *read the scale*. This announcement was the *tolle lege* of Robert Mashaba, and it awoke within him the first conscious desire for knowledge, the first wonder at his own ignorance, and at the great world that lay outside his ken. By that one sentence, lightly spoken, the whole course of his life was changed. What a revelation we get of the primary processes of the human mind! *"I can read the scale,"* said young Mashaba to himself again and again; and in that hour he determined to win that knowledge for himself and to win much besides. He too would know the scale and read the clock, and master many other mysteries of the white man's world. With such a goal in view Robert went again to Natal to seek work. The passion for knowledge grew so intense and uncontrollable that in the eager thirst of his soul he prayed to the spirits, to his dead mother, his murdered grandmother, if haply they might give him the key to the hidden mysteries of the mind.

Soon after this he was overjoyed to hear of a night-school, where he promptly presented himself. In a few weeks he made such progress that a *First Royal Reader* was put into his hand. A little later he heard his first sermon, which dealt "with a young man who took his father's goods and went away!" The topic will be easily identified, though Robert forgets the actual words of the text. Then we find him in great spiritual anxiety, "kneeling before the pulpit" and crying for mercy. After this his passion for learning grew by what it fed on, and carried him on to new and larger projects. Having saved a sum of £40, he entered himself as a student at the famous Lovedale

Institution, where he made rapid strides in the acquisition of useful knowledge. In Kimberley he became a class-leader; and then his heart drove him back to his own people. Reaching Delagoa Bay, he proclaimed himself a Christian, asked permission to hold famly prayer, gathered a few children together, held Sunday services, and won converts, one of the earliest being his own father. He opened three out-stations, and the work spread on every side. He was eventually brought into touch with the Chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, and so we find the entry to which we have referred; then in 1893 we turn to our *Minutes of Conference*, and in answer to the question "Who are now received on trial?" we read "Robert Mashaba, Native Assistant Minister." How soon the line is read, how commonplace it all appears, how little did the men who voted that resolution in the Conference Chapel at Cardiff understand what pathos, what a victory of grace, what possibilities for a heathen race lay behind that act of theirs!

A fine romance, tinged with some sadness in these later days, attaches to the history of our mission in Swaziland. This is a compact little country, about the size of Yorkshire, richly mineralized, not so healthy as the Transvaal, with scenery in parts reminding one of wild Wales.

In the early days of our Natal mission the Rev. James Allison founded a station at Mahamba, on the south-western border of Swaziland. In 1841 the missionary and his flock were driven from the country by the vindictive Swazis, who slew several of the native Christians. Daniel 'Msimang, then a mere lad, escaped with his minister and settled in Natal, where he amassed a considerable amount of property. When native ministers were wanted for the newly formed Transvaal district, Daniel 'Msimang offered himself, and returned to Mahamba, where he re-built the native church. He was a man mighty in prayer, and it is said that as he pleaded with God the wild Swazis wept, they scarce

knew why. His home was a beautiful example of the transforming influence of the Christian religion, and exercised a great power for good on the heathen around. The mission prospered, and on one occasion as many as thirty adults were baptised at one service.

Thus the work spread from point to point. There were moments of deep discouragement, times when the movement seemed backward rather than forward; but through all these interesting years the territory occupied grew ever larger, the number of members steadily increased, and native helpers were being quietly disciplined and prepared for the time when their services could be utilized for a great advance along the whole line.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT ADVANCE.

Let thine eyes look right on.

The Great Advance really began early in 1903. During that year no fewer than fifteen additional ministers were sent to the Transvaal and Swaziland District. Several of these were ministers of standing and experience; who, in the home churches, had given full proof of their ability and fitness for posts of peculiar difficulty. Existing circuits were greatly strengthened, the Rand was fully occupied, and the standard of our Church was planted in nearly every town and village of the Transvaal. Within a comparatively short space of time ministers were located at the following places: Christiana, where there was no English minister; Rustenburg, which had been casually visited thirty years before; Ventersdorp and Lichtenburg, which completed our occupation of the western Transvaal; Standerton, on the eastern line; Witbank, the centre of a coal-mining district, where there was neither church nor minister; Belfast, of which the same can be said; Waterval Boven, the head-quarters of a railway population, and entirely destitute of the ordinances of religion; Vereeniging, where we had the same conditions; Ermelo, which had been left vacant since the war; Pilgrim's Rest, Benoni, and other places which had been necessarily left to lie fallow since the pre-war days. The work in Pretoria, the capital, was developed by the appointment of a minister to Sunnyside, a rising suburb; and at a later date the same was done for Gezina and South End, also in the Pretoria Circuit. On the Rand ministers were also put down at Turffontein, Berea, Auckland Park, Maraisburg, Ginsberg, Cleveland, and Randfontein.

This reinforcement of our army of occupation was followed by an era of Church extension such as the country had not seen before. The mere enumeration of the main facts will weary the reader; but it is perhaps well that there should be a permanent record of the doings of that extraordinary and exhilarating time. Within the municipal area of Johannesburg the story runs thus: at Bertramstown, Fordsburg, and Ophirton the English churches were enlarged. At Berea, Auckland Park, Norwood, La Rochelle, Denver, Vrededorp, and Jeppes Extension new English churches were erected; while Fordsburg, Turffontein, and Cleveland had new manses, in addition. At Spes Bona, also in Johannesburg, a substantial native church, with minister's house, was built; and at Ophirton, in the same circuit, a good brick church was acquired by purchase, for the natives on that side of the city.

Turning eastward, and following the line of the Reef, we come to Germiston, with its twenty thousand white people. Here a church and manse were built, the former being opened by Sir Arthur Lawley, the Lieutenant-Governor, who made a sympathetic speech. Three miles farther on, Ginsberg had its new church, placed in the midst of half-a-dozen thickly populated mines. Yet three miles farther eastward the handsome church at Boksburg was dedicated amid great enthusiasm. Six miles farther still we come to the new township of Benoni, where Lord and Lady Selborne attended the dedicatory service, the former having previously made a speech of much importance, which was cabled to far-distant parts of the empire.

Westward of Johannesburg, we find new English churches at Brixton, Maraisburg, Florida, and Randfontein; a house for the native minister at Krugersdorp; various native churches at different points; and the English churches at Roodepoort and Randfontein Mines enlarged and renovated.

Following the western line of railway, we come to Potchefstroom, famous as the first capital of the colony, memorable as the scene of a long siege during

the first Boer war, and of peculiar interest to us as our first station in the District. Here we find a new English church and schoolroom, also rooms for the minister; a native church enlarged and improved, and a house for the minister alongside. A journey of twenty miles brings us to Klerksdorp, where we have held services for many years. Here there is a new English church, a manse enlarged and brought up to date, and a new native church which ranks as one of the largest and best in the District. Our next stopping-place is Bloemhof, where the church was all but destroyed during the war. Complete restoration was effected; a new native church and evangelist's house were built in the location. We then come to Christiana, a picturesque little town on the northern bank of the Vaal. Here we have a new English church and a native church, with house for the evangelist. Then we have a breathing space till we come to Mafeking, the headquarters of our remarkable mission to the Baralong. The whole Baralong nation, living in its own reserve, depends upon us for religious ministrations, no other Church having entered that extensive district. The whole story of this mission, in its earlier and exciting stages, may be read in the detailed narrative of the devoted Samuel Broadbent. In this circuit, at the present moment, we have *two thousand five hundred* members and members on trial, *one thousand* children in our schools, and about *five thousand adherents*. In this old-established and well organized mission there was naturally not so much need for rapid extension as in other parts of the District, where the work was of more recent origin, or had now to be started; but the plant of the circuit was immensely improved by the erection of large churches at Rietfontein and Modimola. Churches were also built at Polfontein and Mashutle. The English church in Mafeking was improved, and a church was built for the Cape coloured people, among whom we have a vigorous and growing cause. Crossing the country eastward we come to Mabiestad, where we have a large native membership. Another denomination had a fine substantial church, which was practically forsaken,

and the Chief bought both church and mission-house for our use. Pressing on we come to the lovely little town of Rustenburg, where we have a new English church, and a church and house for the native section.

Nowhere has the advance been more marked than in the capital itself. At the beginning of the period under review we only had one church in Pretoria; now we have churches, in addition to the Central, at Sunnyside, Gezina, Pretoria West, South End, and Pretoria North. Several other sites have been secured for future use. Sunnyside also has a new manse.

Taking our course northward, we travel some seventy miles and reach Warm Baths, the centre and headquarters of the large Waterberg Mission. Here we bought a site, ample in size and suitable in situation, and on this ground we have a new mission-house and a native church, and residence for the native minister. Farther north still we find rooms for the English minister at Pietersburg, a new native church; and a native minister's house at Good Hope, which is twenty miles away. Trekking eastward, we cross the Great Oliphant's River and enter the far-spreading Sekhukhuniland Circuit, which covers an area larger than that of the largest English county. In this territory we had no foot of land till 1904, when the Government gave us a suitable plot of about twenty acres, on which we have since built a native church and house. This has given to our work a security and permanence which aforetime it lacked.

If we take the railway line that runs from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay we shall have to keep our eyes open all the way. At Witbank we find a new church. The devoted young minister who went to commence our work here was met by curses from those whom he wished to help. Ralph Connor has nothing better to tell than the story of Witbank, which, for obvious reasons, cannot be fully told here. Let it be said that prejudices melted, opposition broke down, hard hearts were won, and the beautiful church which we can see from the train marks the victory achieved by a young

minister who lived entirely for others. The two native churches that have also sprung up in this District tell a story almost equal in romantic interest. At Middelburg, on the same line, the English church was enlarged, a new manse was built, and a large native church put up in the location, with minister's house attached.

Coming to Belfast, we find a beautiful English church. The walls of this church are new, but they already carry a memorial tablet, on which is inscribed the name of Mrs. Girdler, the wife of the first minister. Her gracious personality, unselfish work, and untimely death made a profound impression upon the whole community. We pass Machadodorp, where we have a new native church and a site for an English church if that should be required later on. Our next stopping-place, Waterval Boven, was suffering from complete spiritual destitution. The very memory of better things seemed to be dying out. They used to tell of a good Scotchwoman who was busy in her garden on Sunday morning, utterly ignorant of the fact that it was the Lord's Day, till she was reminded in sarcastic tones by a near neighbour. Here a church was built, and is the centre of a Railway Mission that covers long stretches of the line. A native church and house were also built.

Leaving the main line, we come to Barberton, which was once the centre of the gold-mining industry. Barberton has fallen on ill times, but our work is still well maintained. The record here includes a new manse, the native church enlarged, and a new house for the native minister.

The end of our eastward journey finds us on the shores of Delagoa Bay. In this important place we had not an inch of ground, but we secured a most elegible site in the centre of Lourenço Marques, on which we have erected a cottage for the missionary and a substantial native church. The latter cost £500, and was the sole gift of Alderman Agar, of York. At 'Nkasane there is also a new church, which stands on an eminence, and shows for miles round the bay.

Again making Johannesburg our starting-point, and travelling along the Natal line, we come to Heidelberg, where both native and English churches were enlarged and a house built for the native teacher. At Nigel, in the same circuit, we have new English and native churches. Still following the railway, we reach Standerton, one of the towns occupied since the war. After much trouble we secured a central site on which there stands to-day a church and manse. On the other side of the town we find a capital native church and house. A drive of sixty miles across the veld brings us to Ermelo. This charming little town was burnt to the ground during the war. Only one small cottage, in which an elderly woman was lying on a sick-bed, was spared. Ermelo is the headquarters of the Swaziland Mission, which covers an area equal to that of Wales. The whole district suffered terribly, and after the war it was a matter of beginning again, as far as property was concerned. At Ermelo itself we now find a new mission-house, English church, native church, rooms for English minister, and native minister's house. We also have new native churches at Carolina, Piet Retief, Volksrust, and at Embabaan, the new capital of Swaziland.

Leaving Johannesburg yet once again, we come to Vereeniging, noted for evermore as the place where the great peace was made in May, 1902. In the house of our first steward they served afternoon tea on the table on which the famous agreement was signed by the well-known men who gathered for the final negotiations. We were the first to supply Vereeniging with religious services; and after four years we report a new English church and manse; a new native church and house in the location; also another native church near the coal-mines, which are a feature of the place.

But the largest and most important scheme of all has yet to be mentioned. The Kilnerton Training Institution, named after a former well-known secretary of the Missionary Society, is five miles from Pretoria. The two buildings in use before the war were partly

demolished during the great struggle. Our first work was to restore these damaged buildings and make a modest beginning. Since then a complete scheme has been carried out, including the erection of dormitories, class-rooms, lecture-halls, workshop, dining-room, hospital, and other necessary buildings. We can now accommodate about two hundred students, and the Institution is full. The staff was greatly strengthened by the appointment of two European laymen as instructors. Last year ten native normal students from the whole Transvaal gained the Government certificate, and eight of the ten came from Kilnerton. On the same farm, about half a mile away, we have erected a Girls' institution at a cost of £2,000. There is accommodation for over forty boarders, and we have made a good beginning in our efforts to do what so much needs to be done for our native women and girls. Near to this Institution we have built a house for the head master. It should be said that at Pretoria we have built two Soldiers' Homes, which did useful work among the troops, under the care of our own chaplain.

This list is already too long; but it should be noted that we have only seen the chief centres and the main lines of communication. In the remote parts of our wide rural missions scores of simpler native churches have been built, generally by the unaided exertions of the people themselves. The humblest structure really deserves a place in the record; for each has meant careful thought, deep loyalty, generous enthusiasm, personal service, earnest prayer, love for the Church and for the great Lord of the Church. In these things we have the only but sufficient endowment which makes the Methodist Church what she is in all lands where her influence is felt.

Progress can also be reported in other directions. The demand for native literature has not been met, but we have made a modest beginning. Class-books, with Zulu and Sesuto introductions, have been published; the Book of Offices has been translated into Sesuto, and is adding to the impressiveness and effec-

tiveness of our Sacramental and other occasional service; the First and Second Catechisms have been brought out in Sesuto, and are having a ready and extensive sale; a new edition of the Shironga Hymn-Book is almost exhausted, and a revised edition will soon be sent to the press. The First Catechism has also been translated into Shironga.

A Superannuation Fund for our native ministers has been established, and is already approving the principles upon which it was founded. The Missionary Committee generously started the Fund with a gift of £500, in return for which they are relieved of all further responsibility, and the contributions of our native Churches have already raised the capital invested to more than £2,200.

It would be enough to make the very stones cry out if we did not devoutly acknowledge that by the blessing of God something has been accomplished; but it is wise to leave the things that are behind. The vast undone shuts out every other thought, and calls for new enterprise, more strenuous endeavour, wider labours for the coming of that kingdom in the tribulation and patience of which we are all brethren and partakers.

CHAPTER IV.

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES.

Already on the sable ground
Of man's despair
Is freedom's glorious picture found,
With all its dusky hands unbound,
Upraised in prayer.

It is always difficult, and not a little dangerous, to attempt to set forth the results of spiritual labours in arithmetical terms; but, on the other hand, it is only by the use of figures that we can provide the material for forming a just conception of the character and extent of the work about which we write.

During the past sixteen years the bounds of Transvaal Methodism have been greatly extended. The following particulars will give a general idea of the directions in which this has taken place. In a former chapter we spoke of material progress; we will now confine our attention chiefly to the increase of the living Church. This is the end for which all other things exist, this is the final cause of all our plans and labours. We may first summarize the facts as to the material fabric of the Church. The main figures are the following:—

	1902.		1918.
Churches..	132	...	463
Other preaching-places .	294	...	896

Let it be remembered that in every one of these buildings, however small and unadorned, men and women meet for worship, they hear the living word, they are brought into touch with the elemental truths

of religion, they have expounded to them the obligations of the Christian ethic, they receive the consolations of the gospel, their eyes are lifted to eternal things. Slowly but surely human character is being formed by the reiterated impact of the divinest influences.

Turning from the material fabric to the living agency, we have again to note gratifying progress. The wisest missionaries have always been ready to recognize that their own functions have natural and well-defined limitations. It is the work of the English missionary to supply the first evangelistic impulse to found a church, to train workers, to supervise and control until his supervision and control can be safely withdrawn. The task of evangelizing the heathen, and the responsibility for the pastoral care of indigenous churches, must more and more be left to the native evangelist and pastor. The Spirit of God is not limited by race or education or temperament, and it cannot be supposed that He will not call out and anoint and commission men of every tribe and tongue where the gospel has been received. We have cause for the most devout gratitude when we think of the living agency of our Transvaal Church. The earlier native ministers were often men of limited education; but they had personality, character, energy, directness, singleness of purpose. These high qualities made them mighty preachers to their own people. Nothing could quench their evangelistic zeal, and out of a living experience they so preached and testified that many were added to the Lord. Not the least impressive lines in the appended table are those which give the number of the voluntary workers. Other Churches have their strong points: this is one of ours. It is an inspiration to think of *two thousand six hundred local preachers* going forth week after week to minister to groups of their own countrymen. Our Church could never have grown as it has grown, nor be maintained as it is, but for this great army of unpaid workers. But it is time for the figures to speak:—

	1902.		1918.
English Ministers.. ...	24	...	52
African Ministers.. ...	17	...	44
Evangelists	34	...	50
Day-school Teachers ..	77	...	214
Sunday-school Teachers	521	...	811
Local Preachers	607	...	2,637
Class-leaders...	510	...	1,750

We now go a step further, and come to the actual Church itself. There has been no great, sweeping revival, but a steady ingathering which has been in progress year in and year out. The revival will come in due time, but we hardly dare to pray for it to be hastened. For already the grain ripens too quickly for us; the people press into the Church, and almost take it by force. Training, discipline, culture, can barely keep pace with the daily increase. During the past sixteen years and a half about *fifty thousand persons have been baptized, of whom more than nineteen thousand were adults gathered out of heathenism,* and received into the fold after long probation and careful instruction. In some cases that probation runs on for three or four years, and this fact accounts for the large number on trial for membership. Even figures may be eloquent, and surely the following cry aloud to us:—

	1902.		1918.
Full Members	8,794	...	25,476
Members on trial ...	3,506	...	9,690
Junior Members ...	—	...	15,508
English Sunday Scholars	2,298	...	8,170
Total Number of Scholars..	7,015	...	16,037
Adherents	46,615	...	106,685

Among numbers such as those indicated in the above returns we shall naturally find all degrees of knowledge and character. The native Christian is often criticized with much severity by those who know little

of his inner life and true character. Failures and disappointments there are; weakenesses are manifest in many places; the progress towards the full stature of manhood in Christ is much slower than we could wish. Those who have come out of a slough of lust and impurity do not by a single effort gain the full mastery over every evil passion. Unfamiliar ethical conceptions are not fully realized in a single day, nor in a single year. New standards of purity bewilder and dazzle at first. But when we take account of all the facts, when we know the antecedents of the neophytes, when we consider the surroundings amid which the new life has to be attempted, when we think of the evil example of nominal Christians, of the want of books or of the ability to read them, of the unsettled conditions of life—when all these things are fairly looked at, we are led to wonder that, among the increasing body of native Christians, we find such a large proportion that give us such joy and satisfaction. The roads that lead to the shining uplands are steep and slippery; the guides fail in knowledge or strength from time to time; the flaunting temptations of a misunderstood and unfamiliar civilization are irresistible for some; but when all deductions have been made we are still able to rejoice in the piety, the devotion, the sobriety, the industry of thousands who have turned from darkness to light, and are now learning to walk as children of that light into which they have come. It may be conceded that the African Churches bear some resemblance to the Church of the first century, as painted for us by the hand of Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians; but the missionary, as he surveys the gracious fruits of his own ministry, can still rejoice in a holy triumph as he exclaims, with the same great preacher to the heathen, "*The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*"

Nothing is more pleasing or significant than the extent to which the native work is self-supporting. It is a recognized principle that the allowances of the European missionary shall be provided by the Society

that sends him forth; but every effort is made to secure the entire support of the whole body of native agents from purely local sources. Last year that agency cost, approximately *eleven thousand pounds,* and the total grant of the Home Committee on this account was *seven hundred pounds.* The total raised in the District for all purposes, apart entirely from the grant of the Missionary Committee, was almost £52,000. In one year the class-money in the Witwatersrand Native Circuit reached the noble sum of *one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.* The missionary contributions in that circuit for the same year reached £672. The figures in other circuits do not, of course, show the same proportions, but in their measure, and according to their circumstance, they are equally satisfactory.

APPENDIX.

METHODISM IN RHODESIA.

Our missions in Rhodesia constitute a District which was formed in 1891. The Transvaal did for Rhodesia a little of what Natal, at an earlier date, had done for the Transvaal itself. The first three Chairmen of the Rhodesia District were formerly members of the Transvaal Synod, namely, the Revs. Isaac Shimmin, Alfred S. Sharp, and John White. Mr. White still administers the District where he has laboured for the past fifteen years with such steady devotion and real success. The Revs. G. H. Eva and Michael Boweni, with several teachers, were also lent, some for a time, to the new District. The years that have passed since the establishment of the mission have naturally been devoted to preparatory work, but already the harvest is being gathered in, as the appended figures will show. No doubt the experience of our Church in other parts of South Africa will be repeated, and the increase will be more rapid when the preliminary work has been thoroughly and carefully done. Meanwhile there is ground for thankfulness in the following table:—

Churches	24
Other Preaching-places	78
English Ministers	12
African Ministers	5
Evangelists	66
Day-school Teachers	12
Sunday-school Teachers	50
Local Preachers	229
Church Members	2,270
Members on Trial	1,210
Scholars	3,583
Adherents	10,562

Mr. White is walking in the steps of many distinguished missionaries of our own Church in Africa, who have done great things for the people in translating the Holy Scriptures. He has already given the people the New Testament in the Mashona language. When it is remembered that, in superficial area, the Rhodesia District is larger than France, it will be seen what a field for future work lies to hand.

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